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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 002210

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SF](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE TALKS FINALLY BEGIN IN PRETORIA

REF: A. PRETORIA 1447
[1](#)B. PRETORIA 1554
[1](#)C. TRENKLE-HILL EMAIL OF 06/19/2007
[1](#)D. 06 PRETORIA 0582

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Donald Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. The long-awaited talks between ZANU-PF and the MDC kicked off in Pretoria June 17-18 with the two sides agreeing on a five point agenda for future negotiations: constitution, electoral laws, security legislation, communications, and political climate. On the constitution, the ZANU-PF and the MDC negotiators reportedly agreed to use the 2004 draft constitution as the basis for future discussions. The parties will meet again on the constitution in Harare o/a June 27, and the South African-mediated talks will resume July 5 in Pretoria. While Post remains skeptical that this South African facilitation will succeed in resolving the crisis in Zimbabwe, these talks achieved more than we would have expected. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) The South African mediated-talks between the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ)/ZANU-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) began in Pretoria June 17-18. This was the first face-to-face meeting between the two sides since the Southern African Development Community (SADC) appointed President Mbeki facilitator at its March 28-29 Extraordinary Summit (see Ref A for Post's assessment of the South African mediation). Minister for Labour and Social Welfare Nicholas Goche and Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa represented ZANU-PF, and the Secretaries General of the two MDC factions, Tendai Biti (Tsvangirai faction) and Welshman Ncube (Mutambara faction) represented the opposition party.

Agreement on Agenda

[1](#)3. (C) These initial talks went "very well," according to Ivor Jenkins from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) (strictly protect). Jenkins received a readout on

the talks from Ncube the evening of June 18. President Mbeki opened the talks the morning of June 17. Mbeki stressed that the situation in Zimbabwe is a "mess," and parties must make progress in the negotiations. (NOTE: Mbeki reportedly telephoned Mugabe last week and took a very hard line, telling Mugabe he was not going to be able to wriggle out of the SADC mandate. END NOTE.)

14. (C) The South African mediation team, led by Minister Sydney Mufamadi, then met with the two parties and proposed an agenda for the talks (not just this round, but rather for the entire process). The SAG based its five point agenda -- constitution, electoral laws, repressive legislation, political climate, and endorsement of SADC decisions -- on the documents submitted by the two parties. (See Refs B and C for summaries of MDC and ZANU-PF negotiating positions.) Both the MDC and GOZ/ZANU-PF agreed to the substance of the agenda, but ZANU-PF objected to some of the language used, particularly the phrase "repressive legislation."

15. (C) Mufamadi met with both sides throughout the day June 17 to hash out a revised agenda which the parties would support. The final agenda included the following items (proposed and final agendas emailed to Embassy Harare and AF/S):

- Constitution
 - Process
 - Substantive proposals, such as those of devolution of powers, citizenship, manner of making constitutional appointments, electoral system

- Electoral Laws

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- Voter registration requirements

- Security legislation
 - POSA

- Communications
 - Broadcasting laws
 - External radio stations

- Political climate
 - Demilitarization of state institutions
 - Hostile rhetoric
 - Use of militias; abuse of state aid and traditional chiefs
 - Sanctions
 - Land

Initial Discussions; Agreement on Next Round

16. (C) Following agreement on the agenda, both sides then made presentations on the five items. The other party responded, but there were no negotiations per se. According to Jenkins, Goche largely played the good cop (being conciliatory) to Chinamasa's bad cop (loudly objecting to nearly everything).

17. (C) Mufamadi secured agreement from both parties that the 2004 draft constitution (Ref D) -- negotiated by Ncube and Chinamasa with South African aid but never approved -- will serve as the basis of the constitutional talks. The MDC views this as a major concession since it implicitly means that the GOZ will not push the constitutional amendments now pending in Parliament. Jenkins also reported that the two MDC Secretaries General, Biti and Ncube, are working together effectively.

18. (C) The two sides agreed to meet o/a June 27 in Harare to resume talks about the constitution. The next formal South African-mediated talks will take place in Pretoria July 5.

(NOTE: Mbeki must report back to SADC by the end of the June on the talks. END NOTE.)

Comment

19. (C) While we remain skeptical about the prospects for Mbeki's mediation in Zimbabwe, the Pretoria talks achieved more than we would have expected. The five agenda items are largely the right ones, but they are complex and not easily solved. We defer to Embassy Harare on analysis of ZANU-PF's goodwill and the possibility that Mugabe and his team will drag out the negotiations, making reforms too late to affect the March 2008 elections. As reported in Ref A, we believe Mbeki is more determined than ever to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe. The Mbeki mediation remains the only game in town, and we recommend the U.S. Government continue to offer quiet, but cautious, support for his efforts.
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